

MIGRATIONS OF *NARATHURA ARAXES EUPOLIS* (LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE) ACROSS LLOYD BAY, CAPE YORK PENINSULA

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Abstract

The butterfly *Narathura araxes eupolis* (Miskin) (Lepidoptera: Lycaenidae) is recorded migrating for the first time. A migration of the lycaenid *Lampides boeticus* (Linnaeus) is also noted and a summary of published records of lycaenid migration in Australia is given.

Introduction

The Dull Oakblue butterfly *Narathura araxes eupolis* (Miskin) is a common species along the Queensland coast from the Torres Strait Islands to Yeppoon. Although this species can be found in large numbers at times, it has not previously been recorded as a migratory species. The immature stages and food plant are unknown.

Migration records

I first observed migrating specimens of *N. araxes eupolis* on 25th September, 1974, while boating in Lloyd Bay on the eastern side of the upper Cape York Peninsula. Three specimens were seen, the first at about 10 a.m. near the boat ramp on Quintell Beach and the other two around midday some considerable distance from the shore (Fig. 1). All were flying rapidly in a SSE direction against a SE breeze. Further observations were made along the length of Quintell Beach on 27th September but no specimens were seen.

On 13th October, 1974, many specimens were again seen flying SSE, on this occasion at Restoration Beach some 14 km north of the above mentioned sightings (Fig. 1). Between 11 a.m. and 12 noon eight individuals were observed crossing the beach (approximately 25 m) and heading out across open water. At low tide, when large areas of sand were exposed, the butterflies were more easily seen against the paler background. Twenty-three were noted crossing a marked distance of approximately 100 m between 2.30 p.m. and 2.45 p.m. Of 12 specimens taken during the course of the afternoon, two were male and 10 female. All observed specimens were flying very rapidly against a gentle breeze, usually at a height of 1-2 m above land but 2-4 m above the sea.

The Common Oakblue *N. micale amytis* (Hewitson) was prevalent within the rainforest adjoining Restoration Beach but no specimens of *N. araxes eupolis* could be found there. It is possible, however, that the latter were in fact migrating above the forest canopy and could not be seen from the ground.

Discussion

Migration in Australian butterflies is not uncommon with many accounts existing in the literature. Most records are of species belonging to the families HesperIIDae, Pieridae and Nymphalidae. There are few published records, in Australia or overseas, of migration in the family Lycaenidae. Concerning Australia, Smithers (1963) records a migration of *Zizina otis labradus* (Godart). Reeves (1971) records adult specimens

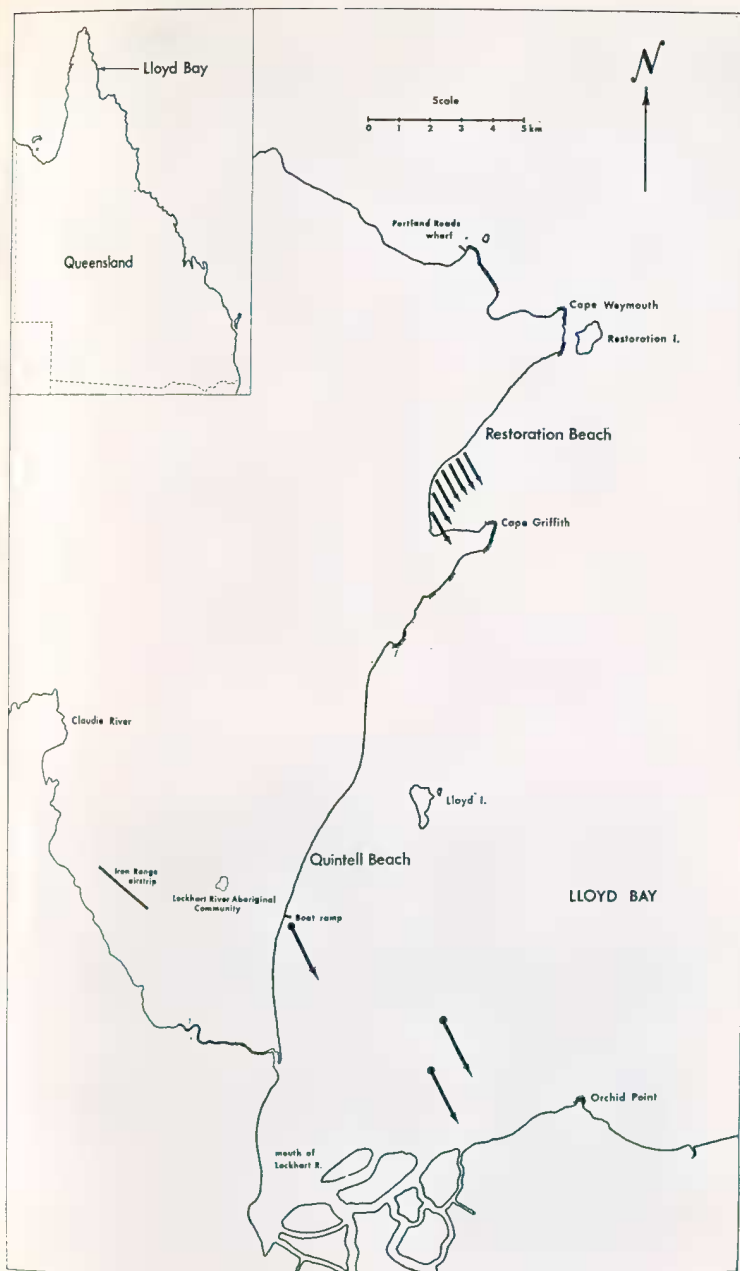


FIG. 1. Map showing the position of individuals and direction of flight (both indicated by arrows; dots on arrows show positions of single specimens) of migrating *Narathura araxes eupolis* across Lloyd Bay.

of *Lampides boeticus* (Linnaeus) and *Theclinesthes onycha onycha* (Hewitson) from Erskine Island, Capricorn Group, Queensland, and states that suitable food plants for these species are absent on the island suggesting immigration from elsewhere. Fletcher (1973) discusses an apparent influx of *Zizina otis labradus* on Heron Island (also of the Capricorn Group) following a north-west wind. He also mentions the sighting of "a few small Lycaenids (probably *Z. otis labradus* and/or *N. biocellata biocellata*)" over the sea during his trip back to the mainland. Sankowsky (in litt.) writes concerning a migration of *Lampides boeticus* in 1974 on Mount Tamborine, south-east Queensland, as follows: "During August and September we had a massive migration of *Lampides boeticus*. These were heading south in a continuous flow for two weeks after which numbers gradually declined. On Tamborine they laid thousands of eggs on every type of legume flower available. Towards the end they were heading more west than south." There appear to be no further records of Australian lycaenid migration.

Acknowledgements

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References

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OBSERVATIONS ON OVIPOSITION IN AN AUSTRALIAN CRANE-FLY (DIPTERA: TIPULIDAE)

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Abstract

The first observations on oviposition dancing in an Australian tipulid fly of the genus *Leptotarsus* are described. Dancing was observed in shaded areas under the canopy of vine scrub in winter. Recovery of eggs from soil danced upon by two tipulids confirms the association of dancing with oviposition.

Introduction

Oviposition "dancing" is known to occur in several European genera of the subfamily Tipulinae (Pierre, 1924; Seguy, 1951) but such behaviour has not before been recorded for any Australian species. It is interesting therefore to record these behavioural observations in an undescribed species of *Leptotarsus*, subgenus *Habromastix* discovered near Biggenden, Queensland in 1973. The family is of very ancient origin and *Habromastix* may well be an ancient relict dating from Pangaen days (c. 100 million years ago) as its recorded distribution outside Australia is in Africa and South America (D. H. Colless, pers. comm.). This would suggest that "dancing", used in a purely descriptive sense, is an ancient feature of this subfamily.